# Socialist Worker

# PROTESTANT CULTURE OR SECTARIAN BIGOTRY?

**Public Meeting:**
**Thursday 15th August, 8.00pm**
**ATGWU Hall, Middle Abbey Street**

# Orange Order: Protestant Culture or Sectarian Bigotry?

**THE NEW rise in sectarian tension in Northern Ireland has been caused by the decision of the Orange Order to force their way through the tiny Catholic area of Garvaghy Road.**

The Orange Order has always tried to foster divisions between Catholics and Protestants. It excludes Catholics from its organisation and has even expelled members who have married Catholics. This has little to do with religious theology and everything to do with a notion of promoting superiority. Just as racists insist on regularly trying to humiliate people, the Orange Order needs these triumphalist marches as their lifeblood.

Socialists reject the idea that Orangeism is the sole expression of Protestant culture. This idea is an insult to the very many Protestant socialists and trade unionists who care more solidarity with their Catholic neighbours than they do about illusions of superiority. Orangeism is not just about putting down Catholics but also about suppressing all dissent among Protestant people.

The plain truth is that Orangeism is weaker today then at any time in its history. It can no longer guarantee jobs or better access to houses for its supporters. The very institution its claims to venerate— the British monarchy — is held in contempt by many British workers.

However, the present tactics of many republicans will simply play into the hands of the Orange leaders. Socialists condemn the call to boycott Protestant shops as a sectarian move which equates all Protestant with the one political and cultural outlook. We also oppose any any suggestion that a return to the bombing campaign will solve the crisis in Northern Ireland.

Moreover, the idea of building 'nationalist consensus' between working class Catholics and right wing politicians in the South like Albert Reynolds, further promotes the idea that their are two camps. We cannot possibly see what Southern politicians what Southern politicians who have allowed the Bishops control over schools and hospitals can have to say about discrimination.

In the need period it is vital that the mood for workers unity is developed and built on. To achieve this we have to bring Protestants and Catholics together to oppose the bigotry of the Orange Order and to reject the bankrupt approaches of nationalism. Only a movement that seeks wider change throughout the whole of Ireland and focuses on what working class people have in common can have any hope of breaking sectarianism.


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